

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-20 were newly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fujii in view of Castellon. Without acceding to the rejection, independent Claim 1 has been amended to clarify the distinctive structure intended to be claimed. Additionally, corresponding amendments have been made in independent Claim 3. Applicants respectfully submit that each of Claims 1 and 3 distinguishes patentably from the collective teachings of Fujii and Castellon, and that the outstanding rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) should therefore be withdrawn.

As now more particularly set forth in Claim 1, the collapsible shaft assembly of Applicants' invention includes a plurality of concave grooves formed in the fitting portion of the inner shaft at locations which are axially spaced from each other and from a front side end of the outer shaft (and thus also axially spaced from the one-piece, substantially annular low frictional member attached to the front side end). Also, the filling holes are formed in the fitting portion of the outer shaft in correspondence with the concave grooves. The assembly further comprises a

plurality of axially spaced resinous slide portions between the fitting portions of the inner and outer shafts, and formed of resin material injected into the concave grooves through the corresponding filling holes.

In the outstanding Action, the Office acknowledged that Fujiu fails to disclose the claimed low frictional member arranged with radial clearance to an outer peripheral surface of the inner shaft. Relative to present Claims 1 and 3, Fujiu is further deficient in that it fails to disclose or suggest the claimed arrangement having the aforementioned low frictional member in combination with a plurality of axially spaced resinous slide portions as now particularly set forth. This arrangement according to Applicants' invention provides enhanced concentricity between the outer and inner shafts and highly stable collapsibility. Moreover, the use of complex and problematical manufacturing techniques to form the low frictional member, as in Fujiu (see the discussion in the previous Amendment), is not required in Applicants' invention.

Castellon fails to overcome the aforementioned deficiencies of Fujiu relative to amended Claims 1 and 3. Firstly, although the outstanding rejection asserts that Castellon shows a radial clearance of hoop member 11 to the

outer peripheral surface of inner shaft 1, the actual presence of such a radial clearance is not evident. Moreover, Castellon discloses that the hoop 11 "develop[s] a friction which constitutes a so-called 'fitting effort,'" which would seem to suggest the absence of a radial clearance. Moreover, even assuming *arguendo* that Castellon teaches a radial clearance, the proposed substitution of Castellon's hoop 11 with radial clearance for Fujiu's resin member 5 having no radial clearance is contraindicated, since this would destabilize the support of Fujiu's shaft A2 (by providing a radial clearance to the shaft instead of filling the corresponding space about the shaft with resin as taught by Fujiu). Further still, the resulting structure would lack the claimed plurality of resinous slide portions axially spaced from the low frictional member.

Claims 1 and 3 thus distinguish patentably from Fujiu and Castellon, and should now be allowed. The remaining claims, each dependent from Claim 1 or Claim 3, should be allowed for at least the same reasons. Note that Claims 21 and 22 have been added in order to provide specific protection for structures exemplified by the embodiment of Fig. 3, the features of which are neither taught nor suggested by Fujiu or Castellon.

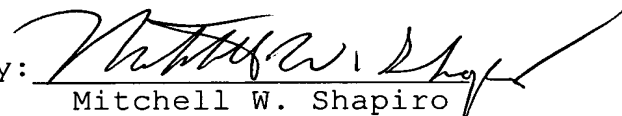
In view of the amendments presented herein, and for the reasons set forth in the preceding remarks, a Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been requested separately, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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